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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 003520

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FOR EAP/MTS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCOR](#) [PINR](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ARROYO PARDONS FORMER PRESIDENT ESTRADA

REF: A. MANILA 3086

[1](#)B. MANILA 2965

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In a widely anticipated move, President Arroyo late on October 25 pardoned former President Joseph Estrada for his unprecedented conviction and sentence of life imprisonment on graft and corruption charges. President Arroyo cited the government's policy of clemency for elderly prisoners and the former president's nearly seven years in detention as factors in the pardon. Estrada's full civil and political rights are restored under the decree of executive clemency, but only in return for a pledge never to seek public office again. The former president is allowed to retain assets he held before he became president, but the bank accounts and property he amassed illegally during his two-year tenure will be forfeited to the government, as decreed by the graft court that found him guilty. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) In what Administration officials called a &reconciliatory8 action, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo on October 25 granted a pardon to former President Joseph Estrada. Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye made the announcement in an evening press conference on national television (full text of decree in paragraph 6). The pardon comes six weeks after a Philippine anti-graft court found Estrada guilty of plunder and sentenced him to up to 40 years in prison) essentially a life sentence. Estrada was under house arrest pending appeal.

[1](#)3. (SBU) According to Administration officials, President Arroyo's decision followed the Department of Justice's recommendation for pardon. Estrada recently dropped a motion for reconsideration on his verdict and announced he would seek a &full, free, and unconditional8 pardon. Dropping the appeal made the court's decision final and paved the way for a presidential pardon.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Arroyo's pardon is not completely unconditional. While Estrada's full civil and political rights are restored, the decree notes that Estrada &publicly committed to no longer seek any elective position or office.8 In addition, while Estrada will be allowed to retain assets he held before he became president, assets acquired illegally during his two-year tenure will be forfeited to the government, as decreed by the Sandiganbayan graft court that found him guilty.

[1](#)5. (U) Text of Presidential pardon follows:

Malacanan Palace

By the President of the Philippines
PARDON

WHEREAS this administration has a policy of releasing inmates who have reached the age of seventy (70),

WHEREAS, Joseph Ejercito Estrada has been under detention for six and a half years,

WHEREAS, Joseph Ejercito Estrada has publicly committed to no longer seek any elective position or office,

IN VIEW HEREOF and pursuant to the authority conferred upon me by the Constitution, I hereby grant executive clemency to JOSEPH EJERCITO ESTRADA, convicted by the Sandiganbayan of Plunder and imposed a penalty of Reclusion Perpetua. He is hereby restored to his civil and political rights.

The forfeitures imposed by the Sandiganbayan remain in force and in full, including all writs and processes issued by the Sandiganbayan in pursuance hereof, except for the bank account(s) he owned before his tenure as President.

Upon acceptance of this pardon by JOSEPH EJERCITO ESTRADA, this pardon shall take effect.

Given under my hand at the City of Manila, this 25th Day of October, in the year of Our Lord, two thousand and seven.

(Signed: Gloria M. Arroyo)

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